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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 1 December 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. GANEV (Bulgaria)

- Question of Palestine [30] (continued)

  (a) Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

  (b) Report of the Secretary-General

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 30 (continued)

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/47/35)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/716)

The PRESIDENT: Before calling the first speaker I should like to remind members that, in accordance with the decision taken yesterday afternoon, the list of speakers will be closed at noon today. I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names before that time.

Mr. CLIFF (United Kingdom): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Community and its member States.

The last year has seen the continuation of the Middle East peace process that was launched in Madrid on 30 October 1991. Despite the difficulties, all sides have displayed determination in pursuing this path. The European Community and its member States are firmly committed to playing a constructive role in both the bilateral and the multilateral tracks of the process, based on our well-known positions of principle, including support for Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We welcome the involvement of the United Nations as a full participant in the multilaterals. We have long held that the United Nations should play an important role in the process.

The Palestinian question will remain a major source of instability in the region unless a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement is achieved. Such a settlement can be reached only when all the parties throughout the region accept responsibility for their share in the solution. We do not believe that a lasting peace will be possible without respect for the rights of the

(Mr. Cliff, United Kingdom)

Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, and without secure and guaranteed borders for all States in the region, including Israel.

(Mr. Cliff, United Kingdom)

The Israeli-Palestinian bilaterals have not been easy, but there have been signs of progress. After all, a couple of years ago it would have been inconceivable that Israeli and Palestinian negotiators would be sitting down face to face to discuss the future of the occupied territories.

While we have seen some encouraging developments in the peace process, we remain seriously concerned about the situation in the occupied territories. We believe that the Fourth Geneva Convention applies to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including East Jerusalem. We urge the Government of Israel to accept the de jure applicability of that Convention and to abide by its provisions. We urge the Israeli Government to cooperate fully with the United Nations and its agencies by allowing the civilian population in the occupied territories to take full advantage of the economic and social support provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and other organizations.

The use of violence and the threat of violence have for too long been elements of daily life in the occupied territories. We appeal to all parties to refrain from taking actions or making statements which might jeopardize the peace process. We deplore attacks on Israeli citizens by some extremist groups and attacks on Palestinians by Israeli settlers. We also deplore the fact that the reaction of the Israeli defence forces in the occupied territories is often disproportionate.

While the partial freeze on Israeli settlements in the occupied territories is a positive step, many units are being completed and no restrictions have been placed on construction in East Jerusalem. We call on Israel to halt all settlement activity in the occupied territories. All such activity is illegal and an obstacle to peace. Now is the time to get rid of

(Mr. Cliff, United Kingdom)

obstacles to negotiations and to remove the sources of tension. We welcome the more constructive and moderate tone of debate this year here at the United Nations.

We always keep in mind the fact that the Middle East is geographically close to our own region and we are fully committed to playing an active political role in the peace process. Once progress has been made in the political sphere, the European Community and its member States are prepared to support the peace-building process and the economic recovery of all peoples and States in the region. In the multilateral working groups, we are already considering ways and means to enhance economic cooperation between these States and peoples.

Finally, I should like to mention that, in the meantime, we in the Community are providing much-needed assistance to the Palestinian people both through UNRWA and directly to projects in the occupied territories. The European Community and its member States will be the biggest donor to UNRWA in 1992, accounting for more than 40 per cent of its budget. The European Community's contribution will be $60 million and member States' individual contributions will amount to about $48 million. In addition to member States' direct aid programmes, the European Community contributed $77 million of exceptional aid to the occupied territories in the aftermath of the Gulf War and a further $20 million in 1992.

Mr. YAACOBI (Israel): Nineteen years ago today, David Ben-Gurion, a great statesman and the founding father of the State of Israel, passed away. It is only fitting, then, that I commence by quoting his prophetic words, spoken in 1960, regarding this Organization:

(Mr. Yaacobi, Israel)

"A form of higher moral rule is being formed which tries to safeguard world peace and peace among nations which are bound one to another ... It is most likely that the United Nations will have a role to play in drawing men together and establishing peace among nations."

I would like to propose to our Palestinian neighbours in the territories that we leave behind the syndromes of the past. Together, let us do our utmost to reach an agreement as soon as possible on self-governing administrative autonomy based upon the Camp David Accords and the letter of invitation to the Madrid Peace Conference. Let us not allow radical groups to drag us down the path of confrontation and bloodshed. Bitter emotions and fanaticism should be pushed aside so we can all embark responsibly on the road of humanism and peace. If we focus our efforts on the positive path towards reconciliation and peace, then the State of Israel, the Arab States and the Palestinians will all benefit from it. It will enhance our well-being and safeguard our security, and it will serve future generations by improving the quality of life.

The confidence-building measures initiated thus far by the new Israeli Government aim at creating a new political and human environment. They aim at improving the ability to conduct a constructive dialogue between the Palestinians and Israel. These concrete steps are designed to defuse tensions and increase mutual confidence and trust.

I hope that the peace process will bring an end to violence. Violence only brings about more violence, whether it harms Arabs, Jews or others.

We will need to reach a political settlement in stages. The first stage will be autonomy. In the course of the bilateral peace talks in Washington, D.C., which are under the sponsorship of the United States and the

(Mr. Yaacobi, Israel)

Russian Federation, Israel has proposed the concept of a Palestinian administrative council. This elected body would, under the interim self-government arrangement agreements, assume broad powers and responsibilities in order to deal with the vast majority of the Palestinians' day-to-day affairs. These responsibilities would extend to aspects of infrastructure such as land use and water, to be determined in the interim self-government arrangement agreement.

The Israeli proposals envision democratic elections to the administrative council. The council members would be accountable to their electorate and would discharge their designated functions within the framework of the interim self-government agreement. Such elections would be unprecedented for the Palestinians, and the modalities would be based upon the preservation of the right of free assembly, free expression and secret ballots.

(Mr. Yaacobi, Israel)

Israel has suggested that the Palestinian administrative council administer the following 15 spheres of operation: administration of justice; administration of personnel matters; agriculture; ecology; education and culture; finance, budget and taxation; health; industry and commerce; labour; local police; local transportation and communications; municipal affairs; religious affairs; social welfare; and tourism.

Under the interim self-government arrangement agreement, the administrative council, as an administrative-functional body, would wield executive general powers within its spheres of operation, including the power to promulgate regulations and by-laws and to exercise general executive functions.

The negotiations between Israel and the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation regarding the permanent status of the territories are meant to begin in the third year of the interim self-government arrangements. This phase of the negotiations will be carried out on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as established in the ground rules of the Madrid process. In this second phase, the permanent-status issues of territory, security and peace will be addressed.

If all our energy is channelled in a positive direction, then we can work towards improving education, health, agriculture, infrastructure, employment and the quality of life of all the people of the region.

The bilateral peace negotiations are due to resume in Washington in just six days, on 7 December 1992. On this occasion I call upon the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks to play an active and positive role in the negotiations. Do not turn away the great opportunity which has developed for both of us.

(Mr. Yaacobi, Israel)

Let us depart from the obsolete and anachronistic attitudes and resolutions of the past. Those resolutions are not relevant today, when peace negotiations are in progress. Let us depart from the notion of the status quo, which proved to be a dangerous illusion in the light of the very bitter and painful experiences in our past. The only way to avoid another painful experience for all of us is to detach ourselves from emotionally satisfying demagoguery and divert all of our efforts to the negotiating table, towards reconciliation and peace.

Mr. KALPAGÉ (Sri Lanka): The question of Palestine is almost as old as the United Nations. By resolution 194 (III) of 1948, the General Assembly recognized the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homes. The Security Council, by its resolution 237 (1967), unanimously recognized this right. But the Palestinian people have not yet attained their rights in Palestine.

Security Council resolution 242 (1967) laid down the principles applicable for a lasting settlement of the situation in the Middle East. The question of Palestine lies at the heart of the Middle East problem. The essential principles for the achievement of a lasting solution to the problems in the region are: the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories, including Jerusalem; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace with secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right of self-determination.

Any agreement seeking to solve the problem of Palestine must be within the framework of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and their implementation. Regrettably, unilateral action by the Israeli

(Mr. Kalpagé, Sri Lanka)

Government, such as the policy of establishing settlements in the territories occupied since 1967, has adversely affected the lives and economic activities of the inhabitants of the occupied territories.

Recent changes in international political relations have paved the way for the world community to search for ways of resolving the Middle East conflict. We hope that this opportunity will be used by all the parties concerned to achieve the long-awaited objective of a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict with mutual recognition of the rights of all the people in the region. In this context, the Peace Conference on the Middle East convened in Madrid in 1991 constitutes a significant step towards the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

However, we must express our concern at the acts of violence and the continued violation of human rights in the occupied territories. We urge the Government of Israel to abide by its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. It is imperative that all parties desist from resorting to violence. Any escalation of violence would lead to negative effects on the ongoing peace process.

We hope that the Government of Israel will grant due recognition and respect to the national aspirations of the Palestinian people. We also hope that it will abide by the statements of good will by its leadership and demonstrate its genuine desire to achieve peace by adopting policies in accordance with international law.

The Government of Israel must take the necessary steps to improve the conditions of the people of the occupied Palestinian territory, generations of whom have suffered immensely over the years under Israeli occupation. Any

(Mr. Kalpagé, Sri Lanka)

steps taken in this direction would establish credibility and remove misgivings as to the Government's intention to act in good faith towards the Palestinian people. Such steps should include the ending of all repressive measures and harmful illegal activities carried out against the Palestinian people. Furthermore, Israel should recognize the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention. These confidence-building measures would promote the ongoing peace process. They would also be an important contribution to securing the good will of the Palestinian people and the international community towards the Israeli authorities.

(Mr. Kalpagé, Sri Lanka)

We note the stated policy of the new Israeli Government that it will advance the peace process in the region with representatives of Arab States and the Palestinians. However, we are of the view that an improvement in the conditions of the people of the occupied Palestinian territories can be effected even while negotiations for a political settlement are under way.

The United Nations has a responsibility towards finding a just solution to the question of Palestine and should be involved in any peace negotiations on this question. This responsibility will not end until the national rights of the Palestinian people have been achieved in a satisfactory manner, in accordance with international legitimacy.

We note that, even belatedly, the Madrid peace process has been broadened to include the United Nations as a full participant in the multilateral Working Groups on regional issues. The United Nations role in these multilateral talks should be to promote a just solution to the question of Palestine and to implement such a solution.

It is our hope that the peace process initiated in Madrid in 1991 will enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable rights, long recognized by the international community. We believe that this should be done through a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), taking into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination.

Mr. AL-DALAY (Yemen) (interpretation from Arabic): After the end of the cold war, the world has witnessed wide-ranging political changes that have led to positive developments such as the shift from confrontation to cooperation and understanding in various areas of international relations. This natural outcome of the new international changes has created a new

(Mr. Al-Dalay, Yemen)

international climate that is appropriate for the settlement of many chronic regional disputes. Indeed, some of those disputes are about to be resolved, thanks to this new international climate.

The changes have also resulted in revitalizing the United Nations pivotal role, that was clearly defined in its Charter which is the embodiment of the will of the international community. As a result of all this, the international Organization now shoulders new responsibilities and new burdens in the settlement of disputes and the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is our collective responsibility, as members of the international community, to respond positively to the positive changes that have taken place on the international arena by cooperating peacefully with each other, and by strengthening the role of the United Nations so that it may perform its task as a world body in line with the Charter and the norms of international law.

On 29 November 1947, 45 years ago to the day, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted resolution 181 (II), which partitioned Palestine and thereby marked the beginning of the Palestinian people's tragedy with the United Nations. To this very day, the Palestinian people suffer the deleterious consequences of that resolution and they have to live with the complex problems it has spawned and which have defied solution.

The question of Palestine is one of the most important issues of justice. Today, it constitutes a very difficult test indeed for the international community: a test of its credibility and its ability to deal with international issues in consonance with the United Nations Charter and the United Nations resolutions which are considered to be an expression of the international community's will.

(Mr. Al-Dalay, Yemen)

The crime that was committed against the Palestinian people 47 years ago, and resulted in displacing the indigenous people of Palestine from their homeland, Palestine, and supplanting them with foreign settlers from various parts of the world, constitutes an injustice that is unprecedented in history. Since then, the region has witnessed several wars and calamities as a result of the Israeli expansionist policy, which is the root cause of the instability and insecurity in the region.

The people of Palestine continue to suffer today as a result of the policies and practices perpetrated against them by Israel. Those policies and practices are escalating and becoming more and more brutal at the hands of the Israeli forces of occupation. They run up and down the gamut of terroristic acts: killings, detentions, expulsions, confiscation of land, demolition of houses, restriction of the freedom of employment for the Palestinian people, as well as the building of settlements in the occupied territories. Those settlements now number 212. All these inhuman practices are being pursued against the people of Palestine under the eyes of the world. They are seen by the whole world on its television screens. They violate human rights in the most flagrant manner. They run counter to the most basic norms of international conduct and breach all international instruments and conventions, particularly the Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. It is painful to see these practices being pursued with impunity under the eyes of the international community without any effort on the part of that community to put a stop to or to deter such policies and practices, even under the concept of moral accountability.

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which appears in document A/47/35, according to the

(Mr. Al-Dalay, Yemen)

Report of the Human Rights Committee describes the practices of the Israeli authorities in the occupied Palestinian territories.

(Mr. Al-Dalay, Yemen)

These reports show that Israel has killed 1,102 Palestinian citizens from the beginning of the intifadah through September last; since July last year, 124,600 citizens have been injured by tear gas, rubber bullets and severe beatings at the hands of the occupying authorities. During the same period, more than 17,300 Palestinians have been detained. Twelve thousand political prisoners have been taken and more than 1,300 citizens have been expelled from their land in the occupied territories. In addition, the Israeli authorities have imposed 11,600 days of curfew over Palestinian towns and villages, including the closing of schools and universities for long periods.

These Israeli practices have not been limited to the people of Palestine alone; they also affect the facilities and personnel of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This has led the Committee to draw the specific attention of the General Assembly and of the Security Council to these Israeli policies and practices, which flout all international legal instruments and the principles of international law.

The aforementioned figures, which were not published by an organization that could be said to be aligned to the Palestinian people, but by an official Committee established by the General Assembly under resolution 3376 (XXX) of 1975, gain their credibility from the neutrality of the Committee's report that informs international public opinion regarding the facts of the practices pursued by the Israeli authorities in Palestine. Such practices should put the international community face to face with its humanitarian and moral responsibilities.

The policy of force is no longer a law or concept that should be resorted to, given the positive international changes that have taken place, because a

(Mr. Al-Dalay, Yemen)

policy of force has no legal justification, is not governed by any specific law and cannot be accepted under any logic whatsoever. If these practices and policies are allowed to continue, the region will sink into an unending vicious circle of violence. The United Nations should therefore discharge its responsibilities under the Charter and settle this issue in accordance with the Charter through the Security Council, which is in fact the authoritative world body that represents the will of the international community.

We should take as our basis the resolutions of the General Assembly and resolutions of the Security Council, particularly resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as they are the resolutions that would reaffirm the credibility and the serious intent of the international community with regard to the settlement of the Palestinian question and show that when it comes to the enforcement of principles and just laws which emanate from the United Nations Charter, there is no place for double standards. Otherwise, the foundation for a durable peace in the Middle East and the whole world would fall and crumble.

My country, which has always supported the efforts by the United Nations and the international community to settle the Palestinian question in the context of solving the Middle East problem, looks forward with optimism to the efforts of the United States of America and the Russian Federation in furthering the peace process in the region through the ongoing negotiations, which we feel are a follow-up to the work done at the Madrid Conference.

My country has welcomed these efforts since the very beginning; it has supported the negotiations, as Mr. Abdulaziz Al-Dali, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of my country, stated in his address to the General Assembly on 24 September this year (A/47/PV.10, p. 58). My country feels that the present

(Mr. Al-Dalay, Yemen)

negotiations will not be successful unless we respect the land-for-peace principle, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); unless Israel agrees to withdraw from all occupied territories; and unless Israel recognizes the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, sovereignty, independence and the establishment of their own independent State under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

We should like to emphasize that it is absolutely necessary for the United Nations, the Security Council and the Secretary-General to play an active and effective role in any effort to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement if the peace process in the region is to be successful. The Security Council has a very special responsibility to settle all aspects of the Palestinian question in consonance with the international legality of which we hear so much and which seems to have lost its way in dealing with the Palestinian question.

My country, in strict compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law concerning the establishment of a durable and just peace, would like to state the following:

First, Yemen feels that a comprehensive and just peace will not be established in the region unless the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people are fully restored; unless they are enabled to exercise their right to independence and to the establishment of their own independent Palestinian State under the leadership of their sole legitimate representative, the PLO, following a total withdrawal by Israel from the Palestinian territories they have been occupying since 1967, including the

(Mr. Al-Dalay, Yemen)

Holy City of Al-Quds and the other occupied Arab territories, as stipulated in the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Secondly, in this context, my country supports the recommendations of the Special Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People that appear in paragraphs 85 to 94 of the Committee's report (A/47/35). My country fully supports the recommendations of the Committee adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its thirty-first session, which appear in annex I of the report as paragraphs 59 to 72. All these recommendations pertain to the basic mechanisms that will allow the Palestinian people to recover their rights of return, of self-determination, of independence and of the exercise of national sovereignty. Since these recommendations are based on United Nations resolutions and international law, their implementation should create the proper climate for the achievement of a durable peace in the region.

(Mr. Al-Dalay, Yemen)

Thirdly, my country will support any effort by the United Nations or any other Power or regional group that aims at achieving lasting peace in the region, so long as the aim is a just peace.

Finally, we should like to stress that the United Nations should play an active and effective role in all such efforts so that the peace process may achieve the desired success.

Mr. ALLAGANY (Saudi Arabia) (interpretation from Arabic): The Palestinian issue continues to be the focus of the international community's attention because of its effects on international peace and security. Since the early years of the United Nations existence, the Palestinian issue has been an item on the General Assembly's agenda. At its twenty-ninth session, the Assembly adopted its historic resolution 3236 (XXIX) in which it affirmed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including its right to return and to independence and sovereignty in its homeland, Palestine.

The General Assembly established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975 to conduct studies and submit recommendations with the aim of enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate rights. In its report to this session, the said Committee welcomes once again the continuance of the Peace Conference on the Middle East, which started in Madrid on 30 October 1991 under the co-sponsorship of the United States of America and the former Soviet Union, as a significant step towards the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

The concept of national rights stems from two fundamental principles: first, that national rights evolve from the existence of a people which is conscious of its independent national identity; and secondly, from the fact

(Mr. Allagany, Saudi Arabia)

that self-determination is a fundamental national right that is essential for achievement of all other national rights. Without the exercise of that right of self-determination in the absence of any external pressures or repressive measures, the people involved will be deprived of all political options. Consequently, other national rights, including the rights to independence, sovereignty and return, can be obtained only when the right to self-determination is exercised fully and effectively.

One of the aims of the founding of the United Nations was the fostering of friendly relations between peoples of the world on the basis of respect for the principle of equal rights and for the right of all peoples of the world to self-determination. In this respect, I should like to refer to General Assembly resolution 2672 C (XXV) which affirmed the right of the Palestinian people to enjoy equal rights and to exercise the right to self-determination in consonance with the United Nations Charter and declared that full respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people is an indispensable prerequisite for the achievement of just lasting peace in the Middle East.

In its report, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People voiced its deep concern over the continued deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and over Israel's continuing harsh repressive measures in breach of international law and United Nations resolutions. The Committee, in particular, deplored Israel's continued reliance on military force to suppress the intifadah, now in its fifth year. The Committee affirmed in its report that Israel's continued occupation of the Palestinian lands and its denial of the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination without external interference, constitute the principal obstacle to the achievement of a just and lasting peace.

(Mr. Allagany, Saudi Arabia)

Israel's violations of international law and in particular of its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, make it a priority for the international community and the High Contracting Parties to that Convention to take specific measures to guarantee Israel's respect for and application of the Convention in all circumstances in conformity with its obligations under article 1 of the Convention. Moreover, article 2 of the Fourth Geneva Convention specifies that military necessity does not give the occupying forces the right to deprive the people under occupation of some basic protection. International reports state that the number of Palestinians killed in 1991, the fourth year of the intifadah, was 117, and that 37.6 per cent of those killed were children. About 50 per cent of the Palestinians killed were assassinated by clandestine Israeli squads composed of personnel from the Israeli army, border police and the Shin Beth secret police who disguise themselves in Arab garb and shoot Palestinian youths indiscriminately and without warning.

Israel persists in its breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention by pursuing the policy of annexation and settlement in the occupied territories. The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People states that from 1967 through 1992 the Israeli authorities have confiscated by military orders more than 60 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Two hundred and thirty thousand Israelis have been settled in approximately 212 settlements all over the occupied territories including the Holy City of Al-Quds.

(Mr. Allagany, Saudi Arabia)

Israel persists in carrying out plans to change the demographic composition of the old section of Al-Quds and the surrounding areas with the aim of obliterating the Arab and Islamic identity of the city. The Israeli authorities are engaged in carrying out plans to exploit the natural resources of the Palestinian lands by appropriating and controlling water resources and by sharply restricting the use of water by the Palestinian people for irrigation and other necessities.

The Israeli Ministry of Housing has recently allocated huge sums of money to projects that connect Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza to Israeli areas, in an attempt to efface the borders between Israel and the occupied Arab territories. Israel continues to fragment the West Bank by severely disrupting the fabric of Palestinian society, thus aggravating the plight of the Palestinians, depriving them of the right to work and to movement, and subjecting them to various types of collective punishment such as lengthy school and university closures, the halting of health care, and arbitrary mass arrests.

According to reports by international human rights organizations to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Israeli authorities killed at least 1,063 Palestinians between December 1987 and June 1992, most of them by bullets. Cities and villages in the occupied Palestinian territories were subjected to 11,500 days of curfew. More than 145,000 trees were uprooted as collective punishment for Palestinians.

In its report the Committee

"reiterates its most urgent appeal to the Security Council, to the High Contracting Parties to the [Fourth Geneva] Convention and to all

(Mr. Allagany, Saudi Arabia)

concerned to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety and international protection of the Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory pending the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the achievement of a just settlement"

and calls upon the international community to

"take all possible measures to halt the rapid deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian people and to develop socio-economic structures that will lead to the genuine development of the occupied Palestinian territory in preparation for independent nationhood". (A/47/35, para. 30)

In this regard, I should like to state that the Arab countries have demonstrated their sincere wish to establish a lasting and just peace in the Middle East. They have also given proof of their positive positions in the context of their participation in the peace negotiations sponsored by the United States of America and the Russian Federation, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 339 (1973) and other relevant resolutions of international legality.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has fully supported the current Middle East peace process. It believes that no real peace in the Middle East could ever be achieved without a just and permanent solution to the Palestinian question, and without complete Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab lands, foremost among them the Holy City of Al-Quds, which is an integral part of the occupied Arab territories.

The question of the Holy City of Al-Quds is a constant to which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia attaches the highest importance, in keeping with the resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic

(Mr. Allagany, Saudi Arabia)

Conference on this issue. Therefore, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes that the success of the current Middle East peace process depends a serious and sincere commitment by Israel to the implementation of the resolutions of international legality and to complete withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, including the Holy City of Al-Quds. Only then will there be hope for security, peace and prosperity to prevail in the region.

Mr. SAMHAN (United Arab Emirates) (interpretation from Arabic): I take pleasure in extending the deep appreciation of the United Arab Emirates to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, His Excellency Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé. I wish also to pay tribute to the other members of the Committee for their efforts and their informative report, which gives a picture of the occupation and of the inhuman Israeli practices against the Palestinian people. It also sets out developments in the political, economic and social dimensions of the Palestinian question.

The present debate on the question of Palestine takes place within a few months of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab territories, including Holy Al-Quds. It also comes more than a year after the convening of the Madrid peace Conference.

In this post-cold-war era, international organizations have reflected the desire of the international community to settle many pending regional and international conflicts by peaceful means in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic principles that govern international relations. That desire reflects regional and international changes, especially in the Middle East, a region which is in dire need of stability, peace, security, peaceful coexistence and work towards creating a

(Mr. Samhan, United Arab Emirates)

climate that is sorely needed by the States and the peoples of the region, including the Palestinian people in order to focus on dealing with issues of development and with social and economic questions.

(Mr. Samhan, United Arab Emirates)

One of the most important and fundamental developments on the international arena in recent years has been the international community's rejection of the concept of the use of force by any State to impose its hegemony, to occupy or to expand at the expense of its neighbours, or to gain dominion over them under the pretext of its own national security. Proceeding from this, Israel must realize that the international community rejects the occupation, displacement and torture of the Palestinian people and rejects the policy of settlement and expansion aimed at bringing about demographic, social and cultural changes in the occupied territories. The ongoing practices of the Israeli Government and its continued refusal to recognize the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories violate the rules and principles of international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. I need not cite all of those practices and inhuman methods, since they are well known to all and have been discussed and explained in the Special Political Committee last week.

The international community has welcomed the holding of the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East and the machinery that was set up by that Conference to allow the principal parties concerned to reach a settlement to the conflict in the region through direct negotiations. My country has participated also in the multilateral negotiations called for by the Conference, in the hope that a just and comprehensive settlement would be reached for the Middle East problem as a whole, with its core issue, the Palestinian question, and that the settlement would be based on the provisions of the Charter and the principles of international law that reject foreign occupation and the annexation of territory by force, and would thereby lead to

(Mr. Samhan, United Arab Emirates)

the exercise of the right of self-determination in a land-for-peace context, in conformity with the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). These are the principles we believe in. Along with the rest of the world, we seek their implementation and observance within the framework of international legality. Notwithstanding the call by the whole of the international community for the achievement of those goals, we find that Israel continues to stand out as the only exception, as demonstrated by its conduct in the peace negotiations, its persistence in its practices in the occupied Palestinian territories and its stubborn adherence to certain concepts and postures that are out of step with the realities of today's world and the current regional and international changes. Therefore, we call upon Israel to accept these facts and to respond to these requirements by contributing positively to the ongoing peace process in search for peace, security and stability, by recognizing the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, by unconditionally withdrawing from all the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds, the Syrian Golan Heights and southern Lebanon, by renouncing the tendency of resorting to oppressive policies and practices, such as the detentions and displacements being practised against the people of occupied Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories and by declaring a total freeze on the building of settlements in keeping with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Israel's refusal to implement those resolutions and its refusal to accept the changed international realities must be viewed as a posture that breaches international law and defies the dictates of international legality. Israel, as a Member of the United Nations, is in duty bound to implement all United Nations resolutions, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and

(Mr. Samhan, United Arab Emirates)

338 (1973), which are the cornerstones of any comprehensive solution and settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The ongoing negotiations afford a historic opportunity, one that has been reinforced by an invitation to the United Nations to take part in the Conference's committees especially those held on a multilateral basis, thereby promoting the future role of the United Nations in the peace process. Fully confident of their keen interest, we therefore call upon the co-sponsors of the Conference to make further efforts to ensure a successful conclusion to the negotiations for a just and permanent solution, that would be compatible with current international transformations. We also call upon them to take appropriate measures to force Israel to comply with the will of the international community and to abide by the rules of international law and the provisions of United Nations resolutions relating to the settlement of the Palestinian question and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, so that it may live in freedom and independence in full exercise of its national rights, on an equal footing with all the other peoples of the world.

Mr. ELARABY (Egypt) (interpretation from Arabic): At the same time last year, we met to discuss the question of Palestine amid the optimistic expectations created by the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East. Over the past year, we have witnessed a number of positive developments in the efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region. However, the past year has also had many negative aspects that could impede the attainment of that objective. On the one hand, direct negotiations between Israel, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinians began with the aim of achieving peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The essence of those resolutions is the inadmissibility of the

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

acquisition of territory by force and the inviolability of the rights of all parties to sovereignty and territorial integrity. This would be ensured by Israel's withdrawal from the territories it occupied in 1967 in return for a comprehensive peace settlement that would enable all parties to live in security and peace. In addition, the Palestinians continue to participate most sincerely and seriously in the ongoing negotiations with the aim of reaching an agreement that would guarantee them the exercise of their full and legitimate national rights.

Today also marks the passage of more than a quarter of a century since Israel occupied the Arab territories in 1967 including Al-Quds and more than a year since the the peace process started in Madrid. All the Arab parties have agreed to enter into negotiations with Israel to achieve a comprehensive peace, on the condition that Israel agrees to implement Security Council resolution 242 (1967) fully and on all fronts. That means that the Israeli forces must withdraw from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, including Al-Quds. We call upon Israel to seize this historic opportunity in order for the peoples of the region to achieve a comprehensive peace that will allow for cooperation between them in tackling the common problems which they all face.

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

Multilateral negotiations also started, within the peace process, to address a number of common problems that face the region and to consider the possibilities of cooperation between the countries of the region in dealing with them once a comprehensive and lasting peace has been achieved. The Palestinians also participate in those multilateral negotiations which aim at finding viable solutions to the vital problems of the region, foremost among which is the problem of the Palestinian refugees.

In another positive development, the United Nations has also been invited to participate in the multilateral negotiations, which is a clear recognition by all the parties concerned of the important and effective role of the United Nations in this regard.

There was a glimmer of hope when the new Israeli Government stated that it was seriously committed to movement towards peace, announced a number of limited positive steps towards restricting some settlement activities in the occupied territories and adopted a number of confidence-building measures. In so doing, the Israeli Government wished to impart to its negotiating policy a measure of the credibility that the actions of the preceding Israeli Government had brought to the point of near evaporation, especially when the former Prime Minister declared that he had intended to prevaricate for 10 more years.

The other face of this coin of optimism, however, is the tragic reality of the Palestinian people's suffering as noted in the various United Nations reports on the situation in the occupied territories and on the living conditions of the refugees, namely the report of the High Commissioner of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arab

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

inhabitants in the occupied territories; and the reports of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and of the Commission on Human Rights.

The Israeli occupation of more than 25 years is still in place and the Israeli military's "iron fist" has not softened in dealing with the Palestinians living under occupation. The Israeli authorities continue to impose harsh repressive measures on the Palestinian people, and have not halted the building of settlements in the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds, in flagrant breach of its commitments and obligations, as an occupying Power, under the provisions of various international instruments, particularly the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. These Israeli measures also contradict the positive climate that was generated by the peace process and are a stumbling block to the necessary confidence-building that would close the gap between the positions of the parties to the negotiations.

We call upon Israel to respond positively to this historic opportunity to rise to the level of its obligations and to facilitate the success of the ongoing peace negotiations by adopting more confidence-building measures, especially in the area of complying with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, by allowing the United Nations to verify implementation by the Israeli forces of occupation of the said provisions and by refraining from adopting any measures that may impede the ongoing peace negotiations. Israel is also urged to respond more positively to the proposals put forward in the course of the negotiations.

The latest report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People mentions a fact that is worth noting. It points out that the majority of Israelis have voted for the peace option in

(Mr. Elaraby, Egypt)

the last elections. This makes it incumbent upon the new Israeli Government to introduce fundamental changes in Israeli policy in order for that policy to be a true reflection of that vote for peace. Israel must recognize and respect the rights of others and, in particular, the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and its right to self-determination.

It is important for me to praise the commendable efforts of the Committee, and I should like to thank most sincerely the Ambassador of Senegal, Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, for his tireless efforts to do justice to the cause of the Palestinian people.

The whole world has witnessed over the past few years, sweeping changes that have led to a great détente in international relations in general. These changes have contributed positively to the success of efforts made towards the settlement of many regional problems. Egypt believes that the opportunity is there and that we should seize it and make use of such favourable international conditions to give a strong push forward to the peace process in the Middle East.

We still hope that the Middle East region will reap the benefits of international détente and that just and lasting peace will prevail in the region and lead to the liberation of all the Arab territories occupied by Israel in 1967 and thereby put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people under occupation and allow that people to exercise its legitimate national right to self-determination in such a way that all the countries of the region may be able to live in peace and security.

Mrs. SYAHRUDDIN (Indonesia): This year's consideration of the question of Palestine coincides with 25 years of occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands by Israel. During this time large segments of the West Bank have been confiscated and settlements established. Through the illegal

(Mrs. Syahruddin, Indonesia)

process of colonization and annexation, Palestinian towns and villages have been encircled. Concurrently, Israel has repeatedly expressed its determination to remain in permanent control of the occupied territories for ideological, strategic or security reasons. A repressive military regime has controlled every aspect of Palestinian life through massive violation of human rights and universally accepted norms of international law and conventions. East Jerusalem was annexed over the unanimous opposition of the international community. The cumulative economic situation in the occupied territories today can only be characterized as being on the verge of collapse. Consequently, 25 years of occupation and oppressive rule have caused immense suffering and hardship to the Palestinian people and had a devastating impact on the fabric and well-being of Palestinian society. Meanwhile, Jewish immigration has posed a threat to the survival of Palestinians in their own land, owing to ensuing demographic changes.

Yet, a quarter century of occupation and oppression has not weakened the resolve to attain their cherished objectives. Rather, it has strengthened the determination of the valiant Palestinians to resist occupation and to regain their inalienable rights to self-determination and statehood. Israel's response has been the intensification of repressive measures, which has led to the further deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories.

It was against this backdrop that the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly last year welcomed the convening of the Middle East Peace Conference in the continuing endeavours to seek a just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the question of Palestine at the core. My Government was particularly gratified to see the participation of Palestinian representatives, on an equal footing, along with other interested States.

(Mrs. Syahruddin, Indonesia)

It thus symbolized the long-sought recognition of their distinct national and political identity.

To our dismay and disappointment, however, these talks, which have already entered their second year, have not made substantive progress, due mainly to Israel's intransigence and persistently negative attitude. In contrast, the representatives of Palestine and the Arab States have adopted a statesmanlike approach and have committed themselves to move the negotiations forward at both the bilateral and multilateral levels.

My delegation therefore fully supports the rational and balanced proposals put forward by the Palestinian National Council, including those relating to an elected assembly to take over the interim administration during the transition period; Israel's disengagement from all occupied territories; and elections under international supervision leading to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State.

Indonesia and other non-aligned countries have consistently maintained that the fulfilment of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people is an essential condition for achieving durable peace in the Middle East. It is relevant to recall in this context the Declaration adopted by the Non-Aligned Movement's Committee on Palestine during the Tenth Summit Meeting held last September. The Declaration emphasized the continuing responsibility of the United Nations over the question of Palestine and also reaffirmed the Charter principles as well as relevant resolutions as constituting a durable basis for the peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict.

At this critical juncture in the struggle of the Palestinian people, the international community is duty-bound to intensify its support for their cause. First, it should endorse the Palestinian demand for immediate

(Mrs. Syahruddin, Indonesia)

self-rule in the West Bank and the Gaza. Secondly, Palestinian representatives, including those from Jerusalem, should participate in all stages of the negotiations and in all multilateral committees. Thirdly, the international community should develop socio-economic structures that will lead to the genuine development of Palestinian territory in preparation for independence. Fourthly, Palestinian territory should be placed under United Nations protection during the transition period.

The Committee has rightly identified in its report the permanence of occupation and the denial of Palestinian rights as the major obstacles to the attainment of peace. The continuation of Israeli policies and practices cannot but undermine the ongoing talks and prejudice their outcome. What is imperative is the unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces and the recognition of Palestinian rights, which constitute essential requirements for a just and durable peace between Israel and its neighbours. It is therefore essential that Israel join in the global consensus and engage in a serious search for peace. And it is more urgent than ever that all Member States, and especially the Security Council, fulfil their responsibility and move forward decisively with concerted efforts leading to a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict.

Mr. JACOVIDES (Cyprus): The United Nations has over the past 45 years adopted a series of resolutions aimed at solving the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which are the recognized cornerstones of a comprehensive Middle East settlement. As we have consistently maintained on all occasions, United Nations resolutions, in particular binding Security Council decisions, should be implemented in all cases, and not selectively.

(Mr. Jacovides, Cyprus)

It so happens that the present session of the General Assembly marks the twenty-fifth year of the occupation by Israel of Palestinian and other Arab territories.

We believe a solution to the Palestinian question, which forms the core of the Middle East problem, is urgently needed for the achievement of peace, not only in the region of the Middle East, but also in the eastern Mediterranean, of which Cyprus is a part, and in the world at large.

Within the international community there exists broad agreement on the principles for the settlement of the question of Palestine. These are the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since June 1967; recognition of, and respect for, the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States in the region, as well as their right to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination - the question of Jerusalem being of prime importance in that connection.

New and auspicious circumstances now exist for a just and lasting solution of the problem in accordance with the general principles of international law and the resolutions of the United Nations. These opportunities should not be missed. If they are, it will be to the great detriment of the world peace hoped for by the international community following the Gulf War and the breakdown of the ideological barriers of the past.

Cyprus therefore welcomes the historic 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, co-sponsored by the United States and the former Soviet Union, which initiated the peace process based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

(Mr. Jacovides, Cyprus)

We call for progress and substantive results towards the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, and urge all sides to make sustained efforts towards a comprehensive and just solution offering new hope to all the peoples of the region for a peaceful and prosperous future.

We stress the need for active involvement by the United Nations and, in particular, the Security Council and the Secretary-General, for the successful outcome of the peace process. We welcome the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the multilateral talks, Mr. C. R. Gharekhan, the Permanent Representative of India, and the invitation to the Secretary-General by the co-sponsors of the Conference to be involved in the talks.

We consider it essential that all obstacles to peace be removed. This necessarily includes the cessation of illegal land confiscations and settlements by Israel. And, pending the achievement of the settlement, we attach great importance to the safety and protection of Palestinian civilians living under occupation and the promotion and safeguarding of their fundamental human rights and freedoms.

The United Nations - in particular, the Security Council - has drawn attention in repeated resolutions to the situation of the Palestinian people under occupation and has called upon Israel, as the occupying Power, to abide by its legal obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

In considering the report (A/47/35) of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, of which Cyprus is privileged to be a member, we commend the Committee for the major role it continues to play in the efforts of the United Nations to reach a comprehensive and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. I would

(Mr. Jacovides, Cyprus)

like to take this opportunity to express deep appreciation to the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. K. B. Cissé of Senegal, for the outstanding work he and the Committee have carried out during the year, and to the Committee's Rapporteur, Mr. Victor Camilleri of Malta, for his most lucid and useful introduction of the Committee's report. We fully endorse the Committee's recommendations to the General Assembly.

(Mr. Jacovides, Cyprus)

In carrying out its mandate, the Committee has kept under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine, has exerted efforts to implement the recommendations, as repeatedly endorsed by the General Assembly, and has closely followed the activities of the Security Council and participated in the Council's debates on the question. The Committee has also attended international conferences and meetings and followed the activities of intergovernmental organizations outside the United Nations and of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and it has held under its auspices a number of regional seminars and symposia for non-governmental organizations. In connection with the latter, Cyprus, in geographical proximity to the Middle East and in line with its traditional friendly ties with the countries of the region, was honoured to host the Asian Regional Seminar held at Nicosia, Cyprus, from 20 to 24 January 1992, jointly with the Asian Regional NGO Symposium. We were privileged to receive the distinguished panelists and participants, the delegation of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs of the United Nations as Representative of the Secretary-General, and other members of the United Nations Secretariat. We are convinced that it was a useful and constructive event and one which fully served the purpose for which these Seminars are held.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Cyprus' devotion to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and its commitment to resolving the question of Palestine on the basis of strict adherence to and application of these purposes and principles. I wish also to recall our support of the just cause of the Palestinian People, as most recently expressed by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. George Vassiliou. In his message to the

(Mr. Jacovides, Cyprus)

Secretary-General on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian People on 29 November, he wrote:

"On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to recall once again on behalf of the Government and the people of Cyprus and myself our firm and constant support of the just struggle of the Palestinian people to achieve their inalienable rights.

"The struggle of the Palestinian people is a struggle for justice, human dignity and freedom. Together with the international community we reaffirm our solidarity with the Palestinian right to self-determination and the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to a sovereign and independent State. We believe that no just, viable and lasting solution to the Middle East problem can be achieved unless the rights of the Palestinian people are fully taken into consideration.

"Cyprus supports the current Peace Process as an important opening and an opportunity for real progress. Such progress must be on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. We urge all sides to sustain the effort towards a comprehensive and just solution involving all parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict which would offer new hope to all the peoples of the region for a peaceful and prosperous future."

Mr. ZIAUDDIN (Bangladesh): The saga of Palestine is one of the most cruel tragedies of this century, and it reflects a sorry picture of mankind as a whole. It is indeed sad that even now, after 25 long years, the United Nations remains a helpless spectator while pain and suffering continue to be inflicted relentlessly on a defenceless nation.

(Mr. Ziauddin, Bangladesh)

While recent metamorphic changes in the international political arena have shaken off the chains of repression, while freedom now sweeps across the world, while détente and reconciliation among rival nations have become the order of the day, and while human rights continue to make triumphant strides across nations, the agonized cry of the Palestinian people is heard as a loud discordant note in this otherwise harmonious symphony. This incongruity is a sad commentary on our time. Palestinians do not share with us the burgeoning sense of euphoria and exultation, for they do not know the taste of freedom. They only know they must continue to sacrifice their rights so others may be able to acquire whatever they want. To them this bitter logic must truly seem a fallacy of gargantuan proportions.

We have all praised the Madrid Conference, sponsored by the United States and the former Soviet Union, as a giant step forward imbuing us all with hope for an early end to this human tragedy. Both that Conference and the others that followed indicate, however, that the ordeal of the Palestinian people is far from over.

Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories continues, buttressed by harsh and repressive measures against the Palestinians, as does its obduracy and intransigence at the conference table. Moreover, Israel's settlement policy for Jewish immigrants continues unabated in the occupied territories with the purpose of perpetuating occupation by altering the demographic composition in the occupied areas. This negative attitude and behaviour threaten to shred the fabric of the fragile stability in that volatile region. It is true the issues are complex, but to avoid further turmoil in the Middle East region, it is essential to achieve some semblance of success in the ensuing meetings. Much depends on Israel's political will and sincerity of purpose in seeking to break the present gridlock.

(Mr. Ziauddin, Bangladesh)

It has been universally recognized that for a just and lasting peace in the region the Palestinian people must be permitted to exercise their inalienable rights of self-determination and to have their own homeland. For a comprehensive, just and durable solution to the conflict in the Middle East and to the question of Palestine, Israel must withdraw from occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including Jerusalem, and allow the Palestinian people to return to their hearth and home in the occupied territories. For the success of the ongoing peace process, it is also important that the United Nations, the Security Council and the Secretary-General play an active role in the peace-seeking process. We welcome the recent appointment of Mr. C. R. Gharekhan as the Secretary-General's Special Representative to the Middle East peace talks. Mr. Gharekhan is a consummate diplomat from a friendly neighbouring country, and his appointment underscores the importance and urgency attached by the Secretary-General to the Middle East peace process.

The intifadah, a product of pride and human dignity, as well as a reaction to persecution, is in its fifth year of resistance against overwhelming forces of suppression. We admire the resilience and indomitable courage of the Palestinian people and their readiness to sacrifice their lives for their cause. It is clear that there is no vengeance inherent in the intifadah, nor is there any intention to deny others the same aspiration. Through the intifadah, the Palestinian people have made it known that the drive for attainment of their goal will not be deterred by the occupation force's policy of dehumanization, detention, banishment or death. The world cannot begrudge the Palestinians their thirst for freedom. Our support for the Palestinian cause, therefore, is unflinching and firm.

(Mr. Ziauddin, Bangladesh)

History has recorded time and again that suppression by force cannot bend the will of a nation. In eternal time, such attempts are an exercise in futility, since justice must in the end prevail, and pain, suffering and sacrifice in blood must be redeemed. Israel must ruminate upon this historical truth and stop the non-judicial killings; cease all land confiscation and settlement activities; release political prisoners; end deportation, administrative detention and the mistreatment and torture of prisoners; restore freedom of movement and other civil liberties; and repeal the military order through which it dictates every aspect of the daily life of the Palestinians.

Israel must listen to the Security Council's repeated calls to abide by its obligations as a State party to the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and must implement its provisions and those of various human-rights instruments to which it is a party.

Also, in view of the increasingly deteriorating situation in the occupied territories, we call upon the Security Council and the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to adopt measures to ensure the protection of Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

The acquisition of territory by force is impermissible under international law. We have seen much too often that in the long run no country can long enjoy the fruits of aggression and benefit permanently from the pain, sorrow and suffering of others. It is only a matter of time until wrongs are righted and balanced by truth and justice. Israel must be made to realize that it cannot sustain its myopic policies for ever. The Palestinian problem, and in a larger context the problem of the Middle East, is a time

(Mr. Ziauddin, Bangladesh)

bomb that needs to be defused before it is too late, in a spirit of amicable understanding and compromise. Israel must withdraw from all territories occupied since June 1967, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions. Israel must cease the settlement of Jewish immigrants in the occupied territories, for Palestine belongs to the Palestinians, and they must be allowed to call it home.

Bangladesh pins high hopes on the ensuing international peace conference to bring an early conclusion to this painful human drama. Bangladesh believes that this can materialize only if all parties at the negotiating table, especially Israel, display a genuine political will and a sincere desire for compromise. Otherwise the trigger in the time bomb may go off again in the future, and this time it may engulf the whole world. If that were to happen, then the members of the global community could not, and would not, find anybody to blame but themselves, nor remain immune from the catastrophic consequences that might follow.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.